Problems faced by Indian software engineers in USA

*208. DR. C. NARAYANA REDDY: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that in Silicon Valley, US., some software professionals who are out of job are facing many problems;

(b) if so, what are the approximate number of such software engineers from India; and

(c) what measures do Government propose to take for assisting such software engineers from india?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) and (b) There are approximately 300,000 Indian software professionals in Silicon Valley, USA, most of them extremely well-settled. Out of these, about 15,000 professionals, who were recruited by US companies specifically for Y2K related work in the latter half of 1999 are facing difficulties. With the onset of the year 2000, the technical requirement for which they were hired no longer exists.

Under the terms of their H-IB visas, since the software engineers were hired for a specific purpose, their continued stay in the US depend on availability of jobs in the US software industry for their particular skills. It is thus a function of the market and the specific qualification of the software engineers.

(c) The Indian Embassy in Washington and Consulate General of India in San Francisco are in touch with the software engineers through concerned Associations, to give all possible help and advice.

Exploration of Natural Gas Reserve in Tripura

*209. SHRI BRATIN SENGUPTA: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether any plan has been chalked out to explore the natural gas reserve in Tripura;

(b) what is the plan of action taken by Government in this regard;

(c) by when the project, if any, is likely to be completed; and

(d) if there is no such project, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI RAM NAIK): (a) to (c) Oil and Natural Gas Corporation Ltd. (ONGC) is carrying